

DVDs this week

By Michael Giltz

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone (\$26.99; Warner Bros.)

After setting sales records in the UK, this DVD finally arrives to placate those who've already read the first four books, the jokey paperbacks about Quidditch and ferocious creatures, the unauthorized bios of J.K. Rowling, and simply can't wait until *Harry Potter 2* opens November 15. Marvelous casting — from the children to the all-star British supporting roles — saves this rather stiff rendition. It's so faithful to the text, you'd think you were watching one of those tiresome Biblical epics instead of a quick-witted fantasy film. For me, Alan Rickman (currently triumphing on Broadway in "Private Lives") steals every scene as Professor Snape. (And don't even ask about Book Five — that's been pushed back till next year.) Stop complaining and leave the poor woman alone. Maybe if she takes her time, she'll actually let someone edit her text this go-round and we won't suffer the niggling mistakes and overlong ramblings of Book Four.



HARRY POTTER

Dark Shadows DVD Collection Volume 1 (\$59.98; MPI)

The vampire Barnabas Collins popped into the moribund TV soap opera "Dark Shadows" and immediately brought it to life. The result was one of the most cultish TV series in history, creating a fan base that thrives on the convoluted plotlines stretching hundreds of years and the rickety, anything-could-happen danger of live television. Previous collections on video stretched to 200 volumes — enough to fill a good-sized crypt. This collection jams 40 episodes into one compact set.

Traffic (\$39.95; Criterion)



SODERBERGH

I was rooting for *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon's* Ang Lee over this movie and *Gladiator*, but I can't help being happy for Steven Soderbergh's win as Best Director. Visually, this is exciting, in-your-face moviemaking and well worth the imprimatur of a Criterion special edition. Warren Beatty in the Michael Douglas role? That's one of the many possibilities covered in the extras from one of the best directors working today.

Rambo Trilogy Special Edition (\$59.98; Artisan)

With a new wave of post 9/11 patriotism, perhaps now is a fortuitous time for a reissue of Rambo's oeuvre. Demoralized and betrayed in *First Blood*, vengeful in *Rambo II*, and cartoonish action hero in *Rambo III*, Sylvester Stallone's second most memorable creation gives vent to every level of righteous indignation you could ask for. But what tone will he strike for the recently revived sequel *Rambo IV*?

Best of ResFest Shorts Volume 1 (\$19.95; Palm Pictures)

Shorts are shown at film festivals all over the world and even nominated for Oscars. But even if you want to track down a particular short, they're impossible to find. DVD, however, is an ideal medium for this art form. ResFest follows in the wake of Short Cinema Journal (a regularly appearing DVD compilation) by gathering some 16 shorts, including "Snack & Drinks," from the animation director of Richard Linklater's enjoyable *Waking Life*. Now if only the Academy would gather together each year's Oscar-nominated shorts on a DVD, we wouldn't have to fight the crowds for MoMa's annual screening.

On the Road with Duke Ellington (\$24.95; DocuRama)

A fun but unrevealing look at the Duke on tour in 1967. The hour-long film wasn't released till '74, but Ellington's vast contribution to music is timeless so it hardly mattered at the time and matters not a bit today. He is always dapper, always refined, always hard-working, but most important of all always brilliant — whether it's his approach to business, to dining, to parties or of course to music. The performances aren't nearly long enough (or even well-miked) but they give a glimpse of what his band was like late in the day.